

Nontraditional Missions

National Intelligence Support to the US Transportation Command (S)

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In early 1992, the United States Air force was preparing to fly dozens of sorties deep into the former Soviet Union. Traditional sources of intelligence were being used to support the operations. Very nontraditional information on Russian airfields, however, was provided to the mission planners. Instead of data on target aiming points, data on ramp space was provided; instead of data on air defense systems, data on ground-control approach instrumentation was provided; instead of data on the hardness of aircraft shelters, data on the thickness of runways were provided. The US military aircraft were not going to destroy the airfields with nuclear weapons. Instead, Military Airlift Command (MAC) transport aircraft were going to land on the airfields to deliver food and medicine to the people of Russia. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) was about to embark on one of the first of many nontraditional missions it would undertake over the next several years that required a kind of intelligence support undreamed of at the height of the Cold War. (U)

Background

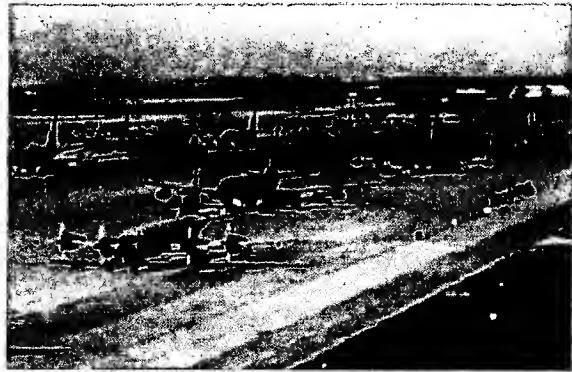
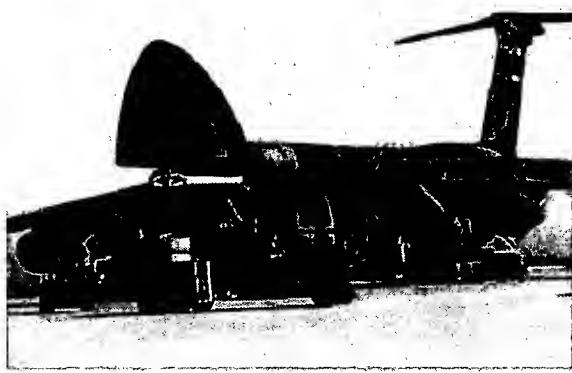
USTRANSCOM was founded in 1987 in an effort to centralize the Department of Defense's (DoD) control of strategic-lift assets.

Headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, it controls the Air Force's Air Mobility Command (AMC, formerly Military Airlift Command), the Navy's Military Sealift Command (MSC), and the Army's Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC). The component commands, numbering more than 70,000 personnel, operate virtually all the strategic airlift aircraft, (more than 800 C-17s, C-5s, C-141s, KC-135s, and KC-10s); 18 active-duty fast sealift ships and roll-on/roll-off ships; many of the prepositioned equipment ships; and much of the Army's rolling stock and heavy-lift assets. The command is also empowered to activate reserve military and civilian transportation assets in time of national emergency. As a supporting command, it acts as the focal point (one-stop shopping) for the DoD for strategic-lift support to the warfighting commands. (U)

The first major test of the new command was Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991. Desert Shield would prove to be one of the few "traditional" operations conducted by the command during the following years. After the end of the Gulf war, the United States became involved in a number of unique military operations other than war that ushered in a new era of intelligence support to a military command. (U)

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US TRANSCOM operations at Mogadishu airfield in Somalia. (U)

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Operations in Somalia

In the summer of 1992, [redacted] (b)(3)(c)
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[redacted] TV viewers worldwide were watching news reports of the growing famine in Somalia brought on by drought and internal conflict. As the shocking scenes continued to be broadcast, the command felt the impact of the "CNN effect," which helped spur the United States to take action. The increased efforts of the UN and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide famine relief quickly overwhelmed the existing capabilities to transport relief supplies into the country and then into the countryside. By mid-summer, USTRANSCOM was heavily involved in flying daily food-relief missions to remote airstrips throughout central and southern Somalia, well before the UN ordered troop deployments and months before President Bush ordered the deployment of US ground forces into the country. (U)

Demands for Information

Operations into Somalia presented the command with a variety of operational problems, and this resulted in a bewildering barrage of information requests to the intelligence staffs. Airlift and sealift planners and operators immediately requested detailed information on the transportation infrastructure of Somalia and neighboring countries. Because of Somalia's return to chaos and obscurity in the years following the departure of the Soviets, much of the available information was out of date or too thin. Planners requested information on the nature of the NGOs operating in the country that they

were now tasked to support. Additional information requests included background data on the government of Somalia (nonexistent), civil conditions, attitudes of allies towards cooperation (French bases in Djibouti and Kenyan and Egyptian airbases were an important part of the operation), and availability of fuel en route in friendly countries such as Saudi Arabia. (U)

The demand for intelligence grew in direct proportion to the increased US involvement in Somalia. The deployment of several thousand UN troops was the next step. As the deployment of the first C-141 plane-load of UN Pakistani troops neared, senior USTRANSCOM commanders wanted to know who controlled Mogadishu airport. That question, given the lack of a formal US presence, proved surprisingly difficult to answer quickly. (U)

When President Bush ordered the deployment of US ground forces, the scale of operations changed dramatically, and additional facilities were needed to support airlift and sealift operations. [redacted]

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This level of concern continued for almost 18 months, as USTRANSCOM supported US Central Command (USCENTCOM) and allied forces in Somalia. As part of its airlift operations, the AMC Security Police, working with USCENTCOM forces, were responsible for providing a portion of the perimeter defenses around Mogadishu International Airport throughout this entire period. Headquarters staff members were [redacted]

[redacted] on a daily basis going over the posted reading files on Somalia from the interagency intelligence task force. Security Police interest continued until the end of the UN withdrawal as the last AMC aircraft left with the remaining personnel of the AMC Tanker Airlift Control Element (TALCE, a mobile air traffic control center) that had run Mogadishu airport throughout this period. (b)(1)
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Evolution of a Command

Somalia was the first of many operational crises [redacted]. These crises involved deploying, or being prepared to deploy on short notice, personnel and equipment overseas by sea and air from a warfighting command or allied country, or quickly

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deploying significant amounts of material and relief supplies. The nature of these crises ranged from supporting conventional military operations (Korea, Kuwait, and Haiti), peacemaking and peacekeeping operations (Haiti, Angola, and Bosnia), humanitarian relief (Rwanda, Cuban and Haitian boat people, Bosnia, Nepal, Russia and states of the former Soviet Union), and special operations [redacted]

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In 1994, USTRANSCOM conducted operations in all but three countries in the world. In all cases, the operational control of strategic-lift operations was directed from the USTRANSCOM J-3/J-4 operational control center and the AMC Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC), both located at Scott Air Force Base in southern Illinois, a fact not always well recognized within the national Intelligence Community (IC). (U)

USTRANSCOM and AMC operations directors are eager consumers of intelligence, because their equipment is big, slow, and unarmed. They cannot shoot back when operating in remote regions of the world. Good intelligence is not just their first line of defense, it is often their only line of defense. (U)

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The command's operational requirement to be ready to respond to any crisis anywhere guarantees that the intelligence staff is always scrambling to obtain current crisis information . . .

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smallest within the DoD), and it has to focus on the crisis of the day. It had little time to focus on a particular region or issue at length, although some long-term studies on regional transportation networks were continually under way. The command's operational requirement to be ready to respond to any crisis anywhere guarantees that the intelligence staff is always scrambling to obtain current crisis information from both the regional warfighting commands' J-2 staffs and the national intelligence agencies. (U)

Even seemingly unrelated events raise the concerns of senior commanders.

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IC Support

The IC's awareness of the command's supporting, and sometimes primary, role in virtually every world crisis involving the deployment of US or UN forces gradually increased [redacted]

This accelerated in the aftermath of USTRANSCOM's operations in Somalia [redacted]

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The J-2 staff was quite small (it is the

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was worse than providing information that might be incomplete. If it was late, it was useless, as the operation had probably already begun. (U)

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CIA support to the command was facilitated by the Office of Military Affairs (OMA). OMA was formed in 1992 after Desert Storm, in an effort to provide better centralized and coordinated CIA support to the military. Its first impact [redacted] was to begin the process of providing improved electronic connectivity, which included computer links and communications capabilities

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In addition to the global aspects of USTRANSCOM operations, the time factor presented a serious challenge in meeting the commands' information needs. It was not uncommon for crisis-related priority information needs to shift suddenly. One week it could be providing information on a worsening crisis in Korea, and the next week it would be providing information on an Iraqi buildup along the Kuwaiti border and the onset of major airlift operations deploying US combat troops to the Middle East. The real-world operational consideration was always "We may be flying there soon." The timeliness of support was always crucial. Providing information late

CIA and Community task force situation reports were always a key part of the USTRANSCOM J-2 analysis provided to the command staff. During a crisis, the CIA Watch Office kept a constant stream of faxes going to its USTRANSCOM J-2 counterpart.

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Current maps were also always in urgent demand. As operational planning to support operations proceeded, the question was always asked, "Does anyone have a street map of ...?"

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As international politics continue to evolve in the post-Cold War world, USTRANSCOM will continue to play a major role in projecting national power and in supporting US policy. The command's evolution will undoubtedly pose new and nontraditional challenges to the IC as it too seeks to redefine its role in providing intelligence in support of national policy in the wake of the Cold War. (U)